



Winston H. Hickox
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Environmental
Protection

California Regional Water Quality Control Board

Los Angeles Region

(50 Years Serving Coastal Los Angeles and Ventura Counties)

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Gray Davis
Governor

To: Interested Persons

From: Melinda Becker, Unit Chief (original document signed by Melinda Becker)
Environmental Scientist, Standards & TMDL Unit
California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region

Date: February 6, 2002

Subject: Notice of Public Hearing for a proposed amendment to the *Water Quality Control Plan for the Los Angeles Region* to update inland surface water quality objectives for ammonia.

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region (Regional Board) will consider a proposed amendment to the *Water Quality Control Plan for the Los Angeles Region* (Basin Plan) which will update inland surface water (including enclosed bays, estuaries and wetlands) quality objectives for ammonia. Additional regulations or policies, consistent with the general purpose of the proposed amendment and complementary to the proposal may be developed at the hearing as a logical outgrowth of input and discussions. The Regional Board will take action on the proposed amendment after hearing staff's presentation and public comments. Copies of the proposed resolution and staff report are enclosed for your information. Please contact Deborah Neiter (213-576-6763) for additional information.

***A Public Hearing will be held on March 28, 2002
at 9:00 a.m. at the Richard H. Chambers U.S. Court of Appeals Building,
125 S. Grand Avenue, Pasadena, California***

Written comments and exhibits must be submitted to the Regional Board no later than 5:00 p.m. on March 22, 2002. Failure to comply with these requirements is grounds for the Board to refuse to admit the proposed written comment or exhibit into evidence (California Code of Regulations, title 23, section 649.4).

Comments should be submitted to:

California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Los Angeles Region
320 West 4th Street
Los Angeles, California 90013

ATTN: Deborah Neiter

All exhibits including charts, graphs and other testimony presented at the public hearing must be left with the Regional Board for inclusion in the Administrative Record. Please note that the Regional Board may impose time limits on oral testimony at the public hearing.

California Environmental Protection Agency

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Background

The proposed amendment would update the current inland surface waters ammonia objectives outlined in the Basin Plan. The goal of this amendment is to reflect the revised criteria developed by U.S. EPA, in the “1999 Update of Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Ammonia,” December 1999.

The proposed revisions are based on the latest scientific knowledge on the identifiable effects of ammonia on public health and welfare, aquatic life, and recreation. EPA’s most recent freshwater aquatic life criteria for ammonia supersedes all previous freshwater aquatic life criteria for ammonia.

Staff recommends that the ammonia objectives for the Los Angeles Region be updated to reflect the “1999 Update of Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Ammonia,” U.S. EPA, Office of Water, EPA-822-R-99-014, December 1999. The update provides acute (1-hour), subchronic (4-day) and chronic (30-day) objectives for ammonia.

There are several reasons to update the ammonia objectives. First and foremost, water quality standards outlined in the Basin Plan are the cornerstone of all of the other activities of the Regional Board and should be based on the best science available to protect beneficial uses. The proposed ammonia objectives are based on the review of additional toxicity studies focusing on ammonia. These studies have provided new information on the increasing importance of temperature and early life stages (ELS) on the chronic objective. In addition, the averaging period for the chronic objective is now 30 days.

Second, the Regional Board uses water quality standards to determine which water bodies are impaired, and thus, to identify water bodies for which the Regional Board must develop TMDLs. The standards translate into the numeric targets in a TMDL. The numeric targets form the basis for determining the allowable pollutant load to a water body and allocating this among the various point and nonpoint source dischargers. The Regional Board then incorporates the allocations into discharge permits as appropriate. The Regional Board has many ammonia TMDLs planned or underway in the very near term. If staff uses outdated ammonia objectives as the basis of these TMDLs, the Regional Board is likely to expend significant resources redoing TMDLs once the new ammonia objectives are adopted.

Enclosures:

- (a) Notice of Filing (pursuant to Section 21080.5 of the Public Resources Code),
- (b) Staff Report for the Basin Plan amendment to update the ammonia objectives,
- (c) California Environmental Quality Act Checklist and Determination with Respect to Significant Environmental Impacts,
- (d) Draft Resolution amending the *Water Quality Control Plan for the Los Angeles Region* to update the freshwater ammonia objectives,
- (e) Proposed changes to language in the *Water Quality Control Plan for the Los Angeles Region*.

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